

Spring, 2013

# The Tallgrass Journal

Goose Lake Prairie Partners, 5010 N. Jugtown Road, Morris, IL 60450

Volume 10, Issue 2



## Chicagoland Prairies

According to Peterson Field Guide, The North America Prairie, there are five types of prairies: Shortgrass Prairie, Mixed Grass Prairie, Tallgrass Aspen Parkland, Tallgrass Prairie, and Tallgrass and Oak Woodland Prairie. The Prairie we have in Illinois is the last one: the Tallgrass and Oak Woodland Prairie. This Month we are going to study the Prairies in Illinois. To do that we are going to Use A Science Note Published by the Chicago Academy of Sciences.

The author, **W. J. Beecher**, director emeritus of the Chicago Academy of Sciences, refers to Illinois Prairie as:

### THE CHICAGOLAND PRAIRIE

When the first European explorers finally succeeded in penetrating the great eastern forest of North America, they burst suddenly out upon the vast sea of grass--The Prairie. This was Illinois before the coming of the steel moldboard plow--an endless expanse of head-high grasses waving away to a flat horizon, broken only by an occasional prairie grove.

In a rough way the forest as a solid plant community came to an end in Illinois because the annual rainfall was insufficient to support forest. In Ohio and Pennsylvania 40 to 60 inches of rain a year nurtured beech-maple forest. But reduced rainfall in western Indiana and Illinois could support only the drier oak-hickory stands.

The reduced rainfall westward across the continent favored the growth of the immense grassland community called the prairie. The tallgrass prairie began in Illinois as a solid stand, just about at the point where rainfall drops to 30 inches. At about the 100th meridian, under much reduced rainfall, the short grass or bunch grass prairie took over. It was the grama grass, wire grass, and buffalo grass that largely covered the western plains.

And into this desolate, trackless grassland, the forest penetrated as a mere trickle, following the serpentine windings of a thousand watercourses, eastbound to meet the Mississippi.

But we will talk only about the Chicagoland prairie, and this we divide into *high prairie* and *low prairie*. The *high prairie* occupied well-drained upland areas and was well named the tallgrass prairie because only a man on horseback could see over its

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### Park Notes:

The prairie looks beautiful. Our park staff is keeping the visitor areas ready, so why not plan an outing? There are many trails to choose from according to the length of trail you want to walk.

Good walking shoes, a hat and a bit of water are a must. Yes you may bring the dog for a walk also, but remember to pick up after him/her and when you return from the prairie fields, check your pets as well as yourself for ticks and other varmints..

Take your walk on Saturday at 10:30 with our Nature specialist. Walks can last thirty minutes to an hour.

**Stay Informed.**  
**Check the Website**  
<http://gooselakeprairie.org>

## Calendar of Events

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*Call the park desk for more information on any of the activities: 815-942-2899*

*March to November—Prairie Partners open the Visitors Center Sat-Sun 10am-4pm.*

*From April through August—Guided Wagon Rides and Walks. Call for reservations.*

*June 15th—Cabin Festival 10am to 3:00pm. Notice the Festival is the third week of June.  
See page 3 for the flyer.*

*Aug 18 through 25 - 7th Annual Nature Photography—Rules are posted on the website and  
See page 6 for the flyer.*

**See the website: <http://gooselakeprairie.org>  
for a full activity schedule for 2013.**

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Blue Heron Nest by J. Giacone, 2012

If you haven't visited Cornell Lab of Ornithology website on Birds, Make it your next stop...

**<http://www.AllAboutBirds.org>**

It is the web home for bird watchers. You can identify birds, see bird cams, find information about feeding, attracting and watching birds. It is fresh, topical, interactive and fun.

One camera on site is on a Blue Heron nest (5-19-2013).

**WE ARE ALWAYS SEARCHING FOR NEW PARTNERS. COULD YOU BE ONE?**

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**Keep the *Prairie Partners Gift Shop* in mind  
when you visit our center...**

*Many Nature Books are available, some Jewelry items,  
Handmade Leather Pouches, Clothing & Hats commemorating  
the Prairie Park and Hand-woven Rag Rugs.*

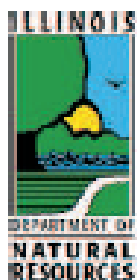


\$4.00 each

# Cabin Festival

**Saturday, June 15, 2013**

**10 a.m. - 3 p.m.**



Join us for the annual Cabin Festival; a day celebrating pioneer living in the 1800s on the prairie. Re-enactors in period dress will demonstrate and teach throughout the day. A wagon ride will be available from the parking lot to the Cragg Cabin.

The day will include many activities & demonstrations around the Cragg Cabin: American Indian crafts, games & dances, dream catchers; bobbin lacing, crocheting, knitting, tatting, spinning, & weaving. Soap making, wood working, & wood carving. Wagon rides to and from the cabin, hiking, flower walks, & children's games. The food shop will be open for lunch serving hot dogs, brats & buffalo burgers from 11 am to 2 pm. The gift shop will be open. The visitors center, butterfly barn & the picnic areas will also be open.

Directions: From Morris take Route 47 South to Pine Bluff Rd; then east 6 miles to Jugtown Road and watch for the stone park entrance sign on the left. From I-55 take Lorenzo Road west about 7 miles to Jugtown Road and watch for the stone entrance on the right.

**Free Admission**  
**Free Parking**  
**Fun for the Whole Family**

**Sponsored by**  
**Goose Lake Prairie Partners**  
**and the staff at Goose Lake**  
**Prairie State Natural Area**

5010 N. Jugtown Road, Morris, IL 60450

For more information visit the website

<http://gooselakeprairie.org>

or call the Visitors Center Desk

(815) 942-2899.

## Chicagoland Prairies—cont from page 1.

waving tassels. The dominate grass was tall bluestem, *Andropogon furcatus*, a grass that grows in large bunches and has its seed head clearly forked. Another common species was goldstem, *Sorghastrum nutans*.

A number of broad-leaved plants are associated with high prairie. In those few small areas where it is still to be found. Brown-eyed Susans, asters and goldenrods are familiar. Compass plant, prairie dock and rattlesnake master are large, conspicuous plants that are pretty good prairie indicators. They tend to be present only in prairies that have never fallen under the plow, particularly in bluestem prairie.

Not much of the high prairie has escaped the plow but there are certain conspicuous indicator plants, recognizable from a speeding car, that enable us to spot the few relatively undisturbed area. Compass plant, prairie dock and rattlesnake master are easy to learn and all have large heads. The deeply-cut leaves of compass plant orient with flat edge toward the sun. The broad heart-shaped leaves of prairie dock can be seen for a long distance. The bristly, strap-shaped leaves of rattlesnake master are very distinctive.

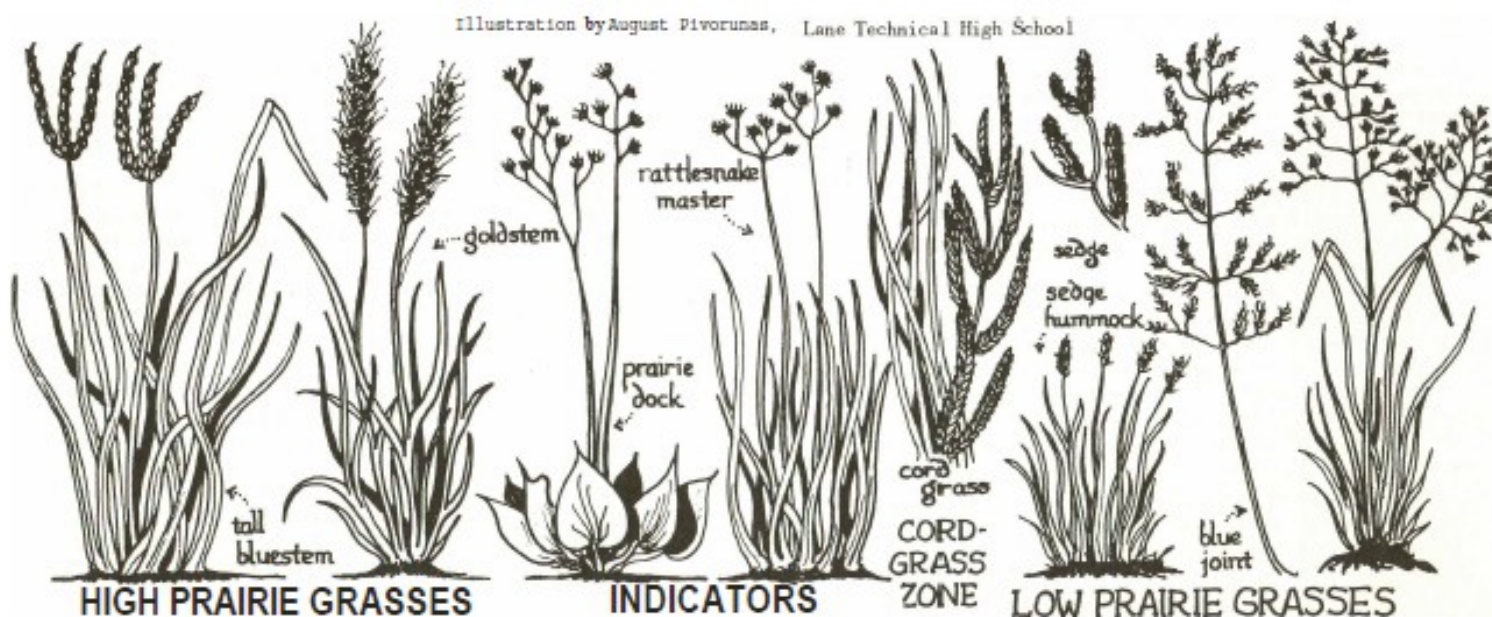
The low prairie is wet in spring and is really a late stage in the filling of a lake or pond by bulrush, cattail and sedge. It is dominated by triangular-stemmed sedges, such as *Carex stricta*, which forms tussocks or hummocks that are taken over in time by blue joint grass, *Calamagrostis*, with its whitish plumes.

Just at the point where high ground and low meet, a very important indicator plant appears. It is sawgrass or cord-grass, *Spartina*, which can give a bare arm or leg a painful cut. This grass has a whitish-green color and often grows in a zone or band only five or ten feet wide. It thus shows up on an aerial photography as a white line, tracing the boundary between high and low ground.

Since the railroads early acquired and fenced right of way land under government grant, prairie relicts may often be found in small strips, even in city and suburb. But the original association of birds, mammals, and insects cannot be studied except in larger areas. Prairies known to me support bobolinks, meadowlarks, song sparrows, kingbirds, upland plover in wet spots, red-winged blackbirds, marsh wrens, and a few other species. There are also ground squirrels, meadow and jumping mice, and foxes. But the bison are gone--as are the prairie chicken Chicago settlers found so abundant.

And thereby hangs a story. The bison grazing and Indian burning of prairie was necessary for the relatively bare booming grounds of prairie chicken and foraging grounds of meadowlarks. One of the results of white civilization was the cessation of periodic burning, which often allowed the oak forest to invade what was once prairie and take over.

Illustration by August Pivorunas, Lane Technical High School



# 7th Annual Nature Photography Contest & Exhibit

## Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area

Requirements can be found on the  
Goose Lake Prairie Partner Website.

<http://www.gooselakeprairie.org/naturephotocontest.htm>

### SCHEDULE

**Sunday August 18th** - Matted Photos are submitted  
to the Photo Committee from Noon to 3:00 p.m.

Following the Judging, the photos will be on exhibit  
**Saturday August 24 and Sunday August 25**

Exhibit will be at Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area  
Visitors Center during open hours.



*2012 Best of Show was awarded to  
Denise Rogers, Seneca, Illinois  
titled "Grey Bells."  
It was also Best in Black and White.*

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**DATES:** Bring matted entries to the Visitor's Center at Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area (5010 N. Jugtown Road, Morris, IL) on Sunday, August 18, 2013 from 12:00 o'clock Noon until 3:00 p.m. The first 100 entries are guaranteed acceptance. **Please note all photos must be matted.** Mat board must be 11 X 14 inches. Photographs secured to the mat board can be from 5 X 7 inches to 11 X 14 inches. Labels downloaded from the website must be secured on the back side of the photo.

Entry into the photo contest implies permission to use entered photo(s) in IDNR and affiliated publications, in general circulation publications and in non-profit fund-raising activities without compensation to the photographer.

**EXHIBIT:** Photos will be exhibited August 24 and 25 in the Visitor's Center from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Display will close at 3:00 p.m. Sunday, August 25 at which time the People's Choice Award will be determined and display will be removed. Photos may be picked up on Sunday, August 25 from 4:00 to 4:30 p.m. If pickup cannot be accomplished on this date, call (815) 942-2899 to arrange pickup.

--After September 1, photos remaining will become the property of GLPSNA.

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*This contest is sponsored jointly by the Goose Lake Prairie Partners  
and the Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area*





*"Patriots Dream"  
PP Fundraiser 2013*

## Partners Hold Quilt Fundraiser 2013 To Benefit the Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area.

### "Patriot's Dream"

### Twin Size Quilt

1 ticket for \$1.00

OR

6 tickets for \$5.00

The drawing will be held  
September 21, 2013  
at the Prairie Day Event.

This lovely quilt has been a project of Prairie Partner Susie Johnson who did the piecing. The quilting was donated by Ann Register.  
"A Patriot's Dream" will fit perfectly on a day bed or a twin sized bed.

You need not be present to win. Whether you win or not, your contribution to Goose Lake Prairie Partner events and activities is greatly appreciated. Ask for tickets at the visitor's center desk.

The drawing for the quilt will be at Prairie Day, September 21, 2013. The prize must be picked up in 15 days or a new winner will be chosen. We must reach at least \$200.00 in ticket sales or the quilt will not be let go. In that case, the raffle date will be changed to allow a longer period to sell.



Samples of the machine embroidery in the white squares...

## Park Happenings

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- Fishing in full swing at Heidecke, temporary ramp is in place while permanent ramps are being constructed. Use caution when launching boats.
- Park trails are open and the Butterfly Barn and Flag Pole Garden are looking very good with identification signs in place. Picnic areas are ready for you.
- The center is open on weekends with Conservation worker Art Rohr on hand to answer questions. At 10:30 a.m. on Saturdays he will be available for flower walks that could last from 30 minutes to an hour. Prairie Partners will also be on hand.
- Call the visitors center if you have a group of at least 6 people for a wagon ride for plant or prairie study.
- 2 new Burr Oak Trees have been planted by the Cragg Cabin.

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## Gifts To The Park Are Tax Deductible.

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Goose Lake Prairie Partners are looking for a few new items to add to the visitors center as well as the park itself. If you or your organization is looking for a special project why not consider the following items:

- 1.) Choose a park trail and monitor it to keep it pristinely clean for our visitors.
- 2.) Volunteer to work the Visitor Center Desk during the weekend to help keep the center open. Normally the Center is only open on weekends if volunteers

work the center.

3.) Consider purchasing an item for the park. At the current time our "Want List" includes:

- Caterpillars for the Butterfly Barn. (Seasonal.)
- New mounted bird or mammal species.
- Park benches to strategically place around the park on various trails.
- New folding chairs for our events.
- New folding tables with plastic tops

*If you are looking for an interesting program for your club or group, why not consider a Nature Program? Call the Park Desk for more information.*

- Fund a mural for the Auditorium
- Donate a chain saw art piece to sit in Bird Corner.
- Video surveillance for the museum.

Tax deductible gifts are recognized with a "certificate of gift" which can be used for tax deductions.

### **PARK STAFF**

**Joe Giacone, Site Superintendent**  
Char McDade, Office Coordinator

### **Goose Lake Prairie Partner Officers**

Susie Johnson, GLPP President  
Bev Mansfield, Vice-President  
Rebecca Sipple, Secretary  
Jackie Martin, Treasurer/Purchasing Agent  
Norma Hedges, Gift Shop Chairperson  
Jo Fleming, Historian.  
Tom Kaluzny, Board Member

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## The Mission of the Goose Lake Prairie Partners

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The mission of the Prairie Partners is to help the Goose Lake Prairie State Natural Area in the following ways.

- To understand, maintain and attract the public to the park by producing various festivals, educational events, and displays centered around early life on the prairie and on the natural environment of the park.
- To provide assistance and funds as needed by the park and its staff for equipment, supplies and other items for improvement and maintenance.

### **Monetary or Time Donations Are Always Welcome.**

Text in this publication is the sole responsibility of the authors of the articles and not the responsibility of the Park or the Prairie Partners.

The Tallgrass Journal is published 4 times a year: Jan, April, July and Oct.

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Natural Area

5010 N. Jugtown Road  
Morris, IL 60450

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Phone: 815-942-2899

We are on the Web.  
<http://gooselakeprairie.org>



Take Only Memories.  
Leave Only Footprints.  
Thank You Very Kindly.



### Waning Boom of a Prairie Star

*Chicken know for mating ritual fading from state.*

*April 13, 2013 | By Andy Grimm, Chicago Tribune reporter*



Wambsgans, Chicago Tribune)

A male greater prairie chicken extends its ear plumage and inflates its air sacs during a mating dance (during April) on the booming grounds of the Prairie Ridge State Natural Area near Newton. (E. J. A. S. O. N)

The greater prairie chickens have begun their mating ritual on restored grassland habitat some 220 miles south of Chicago, and this year the showmanship matches the stakes for Illinois' dwindling flock.

[Click here](#) for the link to the rest of the story on the web...

[http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2013-04-13/news/ct-met-illinois-prairie-chickens-20130413\\_1\\_prairie-chicken-prairie-ridge-tall-grass-prairie](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2013-04-13/news/ct-met-illinois-prairie-chickens-20130413_1_prairie-chicken-prairie-ridge-tall-grass-prairie)

*(Printed in part with permission of the Chicago Tribune.)*

## Revised Special Event Dates

### Cabin Festival 2013

June 15  
10-3 O'Clock

### 7th Annual Photo Contest/Exhibit

August 18–25

Check the Website  
for details.